

# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

## Mayor's Office



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### INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Employees  
**FROM:** James R. Engler  
**DATE:** June 26, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** 5<sup>th</sup> Policy Statement re: Covid-19

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We remain committed to revising this policy statement during the COVID-19 pandemic to account for evolving public health guidelines, recently-passed laws and statutes, and the City's changing operational needs. Accordingly, we are modifying our policy statement as follows:

As of mid-May 2020, daily COVID-19 case counts in Philadelphia fell to about half those of mid-April and continued to decline. Due to this, the City of Philadelphia transitioned to the Yellow Phase and began limited re-opening of priority public-facing functions. Now, with daily COVID-19 case counts continuing to stabilize trend downward, **Philadelphia will begin to transition to the Green Phase of re-opening as detailed in Health Department's Green Phase Plan: [Reopening with Care: Philadelphia's Strategy for Moving to Green](#) beginning on July 3, 2020.** Accordingly, the City has revised both its internal safety guidelines for City departments and employees as well as this policy statement.

Beginning on July 3, 2020, additional City operations and functions may continue to re-open in accordance with the City's Safe Return to Work guidelines, which can be found under the [HR Info & Policies section of the City's Remote Work website](#). Appointing Authorities, in accordance with the City's safety guidelines, may determine which City services and programs may resume during this time and which personnel will be required to support those functions.

#### **Resuming City Operations During the Green Phase**

*Onsite Work* – Appointing Authorities must limit onsite staff to those whose presence is required to complete necessary tasks in support of City services or programs. Onsite work must be managed in accordance with the City's Safe Return to Work guidelines to ensure the safety of both employees and the public.

*Offsite Work and Work-from-Home* – Appointing Authorities may continue to grant permission for all City employees, who are able to do so, to work from home whenever possible in order to minimize onsite staff and to continue core department operations. Functionally, Appointing Authorities should identify which tasks/functions of their respective departments can be performed from home, and which personnel will be tasked with completing the identified tasks/functions. **Please note that the tasks/functions need not be essential or necessary; Appointing Authorities may require employees perform any and all types of work from home.** City employees working from home must follow, to the extent possible, the guidelines set forth in the [Virtual Work Policy for City Employees](#) issued on June 1, 2020. Once the City resumes normalized onsite operations, employees will be able to continue to request to work from home to in

accordance with this policy. All such requests will need to be reviewed and approved by the Appointing Authority.

### **Public Health Guidelines**

*Self-Quarantine* – We continue to emphasize the need to self-quarantine as the primary method of reducing exposure risk. To mitigate the risk of exposure in the workplace, employees are required to respond to a daily questionnaire regarding any possible COVID-19 symptoms or exposure prior to their start of work in accordance with the [COVID-19 Screening Policy for City Employees](#) issued on June 5, 2020. Employees who meet any of the following criteria and are not in positions required to follow the protocols for healthcare workers, must notify their Appointing Authority or designee immediately and will be required to self-quarantine for fourteen days. Those employees required to follow the protocols for healthcare workers should follow the guidance detailed [here](#).

- Employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, dry cough, shortness of breath) who are being evaluated as a person under investigation for COVID-19;
- Employees who are required to comply with a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
- Employees who have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19; or,
- Employees who have come into close contact<sup>1</sup> with an individual who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Employees who have received a diagnosis of COVID-19 should follow the direction of their health care provider and directions of the Department of Public Health. This may require self-isolation for longer than the required 14 days and/or confirmatory negative tests before an employee will be cleared to return to work.

Where possible, employees on self-quarantine who are well enough to work may work from home for all or some of this time in accordance with the [Virtual Work Policy for City Employees](#).

*At-Risk Employees* – Employees with a medically-documented greater risk of harm from the virus, such as those with compromised immune systems, should inform their Appointing Authority. Where appropriate, the Appointing Authority should take this into consideration when assigning onsite tasks. Appointing Authorities should engage in the interactive process to determine what accommodations may be made for employees faced with this situation.

*Meetings* – All meetings of more than 25 people should be held virtually or postponed. If onsite meetings are to be held, physical distancing must be enforced (i.e., sitting at least 6 ft apart) and in accordance with the City's Safe Return to Work guidelines.

*Official Travel* – All official, non-essential international and domestic travel within the next 60 days on behalf of city government continues to be suspended.

### **Leave Usage**

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<sup>1</sup> The Centers for Disease Control consider "close contact" a being within approximately six feet of a COVID-19 case for more than ten minutes or coming into direct contact with infectious substances (e.g., being coughed on.)

*COVID Excused Time vs. Leave* – Employees who are required to work, either onsite or offsite, and, do not complete their regularly scheduled shift as assigned because they chose not to or for personal reasons, must use approved leave such as vacation, compensatory time or sick leave. If the leave is not approved, the employee will be marked AWOL. Employees will still be granted COVID Excused Time for any time in which they are not required to work in order to adhere to the social distancing requirements detailed in the City’s Safe Return to Work guidelines.

Employees who self-quarantine at the direction of a departmental safety officer or human resources professional due to close contact with an individual potentially infected with COVID-19 while at work will be granted COVID Excused Time while self-quarantining.

*Dependent Care Leave Usage* – Employees may use accumulated leave, including sick time, to care for a dependent who is in self-quarantine or in the case of COVID-19 related school or daycare closure for their children. Accumulated leave may be used intermittently. If the employees are able and authorized to work from home, they may use work from home time during this time period. Employees for whom the City has opted-out of providing FMLA+ (see below) are limited to using accrued leave for dependent care pursuant to existing leave usage policies and collective bargaining agreements.

*Emergency Paid Sick Leave and FMLA+* – Beginning April 1, 2020, employees are eligible for up to ten days’ Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) and certain employees may also be eligible for up to 12 weeks’ FMLA+ pursuant to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Guidance on both EPSL and FMLA+ can be found [HERE](#).

Please note that because the EPSL provides ten days’ leave, the City will no longer be advancing sick leave for COVID-19 related conditions after April 1, 2020.

*Physician’s Notes* – Appointing authorities may require medical documentation justifying an employee’s extended absence when the employee’s quarantine<sup>2</sup> or isolation<sup>3</sup> exceeds fourteen days. Appointing authorities may also require medical documentation of an employee’s fitness to return to work if that employee attempts to return before the appropriate quarantine/isolation period has expired. Departments are reminded to follow the Department of Public Health’s guidance on quarantine or isolation periods.

## **Childcare**

*School and Daycare Closures* – At present, employees are not permitted to bring children to City facilities. Once normal City onsite operations resume, employees unable to make alternate childcare arrangements may bring their children to work with their Appointing Authority’s written approval. All such requests must be assessed by the Appointing authority to assure the environment provides the flexibility and safety to grant the requests and will not disrupt the workplace. Sick children with infectious illnesses, such as chickenpox, head lice, or conjunctivitis, shall not be brought into the workplace at any time. Appointing Authorities may determine that some units, programs, or worksites are unable to accommodate children.

## **Emergency Updates**

*Emergency Messaging* – We strongly encourage employees to opt-in to receiving emergency messages regarding any ongoing City issues by providing cell phone numbers if they want text message updates.

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<sup>2</sup> An employee should quarantine after being in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual.

<sup>3</sup> An employee should isolate when she has tested positive for COVID-19 (with or without symptoms) or has displayed COVID-19-like symptoms.

Updates will also be provided by email, and, in some cases, by phone. We also recommend that all employees stay up to date on the status of COVID-19 both internally and in the City by visiting the City's site dedicated to the COVID-19 outbreak: [phila.gov/COVID-19](https://phila.gov/COVID-19) and opting into text messages by texting COVIDPHL to 888-777.